

Last November, as I installed the new kitchen counter and sink and the house was finally almost perfect, as I celebrated my 64th birthday, I sold my home because I was unable to keep up with the utilities. My mortgage was low (only 4.75 percent), and I had a USDA grant which enabled me to have a new gas furnace. Unfortunately the town is in the process of replacing the sewer system, the water district is upgrading their system and the electricity and gas just keep going up and up and up. I was paying more for utilities than I was for my mortgage and USDA loan. I attended a financial seminar provided by my church to find out how I could make ends meet. What was I not doing that would make the difference of financial stability? I tried finding part-time work but no one would hire me for the few hours I could work without compromising my health. My skills were outdated. I could not obtain approval for school on the Internet. I could only go to school to learn something if I would not be self-employed and the school was so far away. The hours spent would be on their terms, not when my body could work, and would again compromise my health. Selling was my only way out of debt, or I could continue as I was and continue to "charge" all my groceries, medicine, gas, etc., and keep the bills paid . . . for a while.

The price of gasoline was not too much of a problem as I lived 2 blocks from church, 1 block from the post office and Walmart had just moved into town! I could still walk to most places I needed to go.

Now, gasoline is a problem. The only low-income apartment I could find was in Wallace, Idaho, 15 miles from where I had been. [It does not] seem very far, does it? But if everything you do is that far away, there is no public transportation, and the price of gasoline is \$4.00+, it is far indeed. I do much of my shopping via the Internet as the drive to the nearest town where fabric, books, electronics, etc. are sold is 50 miles each way. My daughter paid for my Internet service so I would not be so out of touch with the world.

I was already committed to directing my granddaughter's school Christmas and Spring musical plays. That meant a trip to Kellogg every day. While I still had some money left from the sale of my home I could absorb this cost. Now the money is gone and I haven't seen my family in 2 weeks. I try to combine my trips to church with shopping for groceries at Walmart. I do not attend many of the functions at church anymore. I used to be at the church almost every day. I may have to stop going to that church completely and go to one here in Wallace. That sounds reasonable, but the church in Smeltonville is ALIVE! The churches here are not.

I miss my little four room house in Smeltonville with its big south-facing windows, playing in the dirt in the yard, the scent of the flowers, the garage with my wood-working tools and the clothesline. My apartment here is clean, maintained, sufficient but dark. It is on the north side of a square red brick building. There is no room for my saws, my bicycle or my kayak. It is too dark even for container plants. The trunk of my car is my storage room. It is like living in a cave, and the building reminds me of a prison. I must have the lights on all the time, but the heat doesn't cost as much as my home did and I do not have to pay for sewer, water and garbage. Now with the price of gas I also miss my family, my church and my friends. I am trying to start a new life here. I really am. But starting all over again this time is harder than all the physical work I did on my home.

Yes, we need alternative sources of energy. I have always known that. We need to build

smarter. I have always known that. We need community transportation especially in rural areas. If it is at all possible, make some of these alternative sources of energy available to the poorer elders of this country. Do not make them leave their homes because the infrastructure in this country is falling apart. Do not allow any new homes to be built without solar or wind power. The Swedes do not let you build without a composting toilet! I learned a lot living in an RV over the years. I have read many books on alternative housing. I would have built one but it would have cost me much more than my "tear-it-down!" house that no one wanted did. We do not have to keep building the way we are. So wasteful. Now I'm running off on a tangent and this letter is too long already!

Thank you for listening to this elder travel down a few old trails. I appreciate it.

I would be happy to talk with you or your representatives if you have any questions.

MERILYN, Wallace.

I provide sliding fee scale mental health services for those who do not qualify for assistance or have insurance that covers their services. If my wife did not have a second income as a teacher (24 years) I could not afford this ministry. I live and travel central Idaho (Valley, Adams, and Idaho counties) as do my patients. Rising energy is problematic both in fossil fuels and electricity for us all. Most of us are independent by nature, but this ongoing crisis will continue to put many of us on assistance lists we wish to avoid. It is also affecting the delivery of basic subsistence services for our schools, hospitals, and public services.

MICHAEL.

The suggestion to drill in ANWAR and off the coasts is mere rhetoric when you imply it will reduce the rising costs of gasoline at the pump today. From all the information I have found, it would take 10 years to get that oil into production, and then it would supply a mere 6 months of the U.S. needs at our current rate of consumption. Probably less than we would be demanding in 10 years, [I] think? Do you have information that contradicts this? I would be happy to hear it.

The multinational oil companies who would be doing the drilling would be selling the oil on the open world market, and we as a country would have no more chance to benefit from this than we now do from the "foreign" oil you discourage. They make a profit wherever they drill, they do not save it just for us. We already sell most of our power-producing coal to China today. How many [in] the Congress know that?

We cannot drill our way out of this mess.

You should first close the investment loopholes that have encouraged the new "bubble" of speculation in crude oil (after running away from the housing bubble). It would be great if you could also close other potential "bubble" opportunities, like food, and who knows what the investment nuts will think of next? Speculation is well on the way to ruining our economy.

You should next enact serious legislation to encourage conservation, and invest in an expansion of proven alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power.

You should NOT encourage investment in nuclear power. That, also, will take 20 years to come online, therefore having no effect on our current needs. So far as I can see we have never found a way to dispose safely of the waste. To encourage nuclear building will be a very expensive subsidy for the nuclear industry, but creating even more unpleasant problems for future generations.

You should encourage investment, with tax incentives, for technological research

and development of truly new energy possibilities. I have no idea what these might turn out to be, but Americans are supposed to be inventive. Let's encourage that old spirit again.

If you really want to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, you should pass some kind of subsidy for low income people to buy hybrid or electric cars. (I know, I know . . . sounds like a handout). But it would be the most effective use of tax dollars in a direct way to substantially reduce reliance on oil. Eliminating the subsidy for the oil companies, and spending it on fuel efficient cars right now, would be more logical. (Just think of it as a gift to the struggling automotive industry; if you really want to be patriotic limit the payment to American made cars, if you can find any of those left.)

I live out in the country, and I am only one of many here in the rural west who have to have my car to get to town for work, groceries, doctor appointments, etc. We have no public transportation available. At current prices, one trip to town costs me \$8.50. Of course I try to limit the number of trips, because I am retired. Ridiculous ideas like a gas tax moratorium are a waste of everyone's time. So are the drumbeats of drilling for more oil in inadequately supplied places which could not possibly or timely relieve the crunch we are in now. If we had a decent oil pool anywhere in the U.S. I could see drilling, but these possibilities you list are inadequate. We need to get away from oil as much as possible, and we need to do it fast. I have lived most of my life in an oil abundant economy, taking it for granted. But I can see the road ahead and it's not pretty.

I am guessing my letter will go in the waste pile reserved for those who disagree with you. It would be interesting to hear your thoughts on my suggestions. It is time for real head scratching, thinking, and cooperation, not politics as usual.

JILL, Orofino.

Senator Crapo—with pleasure. As a retired engineer, professor, vet, et al.—your priorities are close—certainly emphasize nuclear—but our legislators should stop playing their petty political games and allow/seek oil production and refining capabilities! Drill in the north slope/preserve of Alaska—NOW! Allow the oil companies to build more refineries—NOW! Most frankly—the political and environmental games have REALLY CAUSED our energy problems!

W.C. Idaho Falls.

We appreciate the offer to allow us to address this concern. Vern and I are on fixed incomes and are working part time jobs to help make the ends meet. Social Security brings a large chunk of the income into our home but it is quickly swallowed up with medical insurance to cover any problems that we might have. With both of us being in the 70s now it is harder to find work opportunities. We both come from large families and so we were unable to go to college for a degree. Both our fathers were blue collar workers who only went through grade school years. This was the norm for their growing up years.

With cost of insurances for medical, home and vehicle, we are paying out over \$650.00 a month. That is for the least amount we can afford. Social Security gives us a small increase in January and then takes it away with the premiums to cover our Medicare insurance. This is over and above the amount listed above.

My husband worked for Frontier Airlines for 26 years and we had put aside what we thought was an adequate amount to help us with the addition of the remaining work years added and without child costs. We also